

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 25, 2003

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JAEGER RELEASES PROPOSED STATE PLAN FOR ELECTION REFORM

Bismarck, ND – Secretary of State Al Jaeger released today the state's proposed plan to implement federal election reform over the course of the next three years. The plan outlines how the state will allocate approximately \$8 million dollars of the \$9 million in federal funds the state anticipates spending between now and January 1, 2006.

The plan released by Jaeger's office is in response to requirements of the Help America Vote Act of 2002. Better known as HAVA, the far-reaching reform legislation has been described as the most sweeping change to our nation's election laws since passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 and gives states the tools and resources to significantly improve elections and election administration in our nation.

"While North Dakota has had a positive track record in conducting elections over the years, the new election rules will reinforce our successes and have a positive impact on North Dakota's election process in the future," said Jaeger. "HAVA presents an opportunity for improvement, which is reflected in the proposed plan."

HAVA includes a multitude of changes and requirements intended to improve voting systems and procedures and the way elections are conducted. The new law also provides federal money to states for the purposes of improving election administration, replacing punch card voting equipment, better educating election workers and voters, improving voter accessibility, and purchasing new and advanced voting equipment. According to Jaeger, the state has already received \$5 million and expects to receive another \$4.15 million by the end of September.

To assist in the development of the state plan, Jaeger's appointed an 18-member State HAVA Planning Committee, representing diverse voter interests. The committee includes county and local election officials along with representation from the disability and senior citizen communities, the Indian Affairs Commission, the technology sector, voter interest groups, and private citizens. The committee met three times in May and June to discuss North Dakota's needs and to develop the proposed plan being released today. At the conclusion of the public comment period, the planning committee will reconvene to make final changes resulting from the public review and comment period.

"I am very pleased with the efforts of the state planning committee and others who have been involved in the development of North Dakota's proposed plan," said Jaeger. "The plan reflects hard work and innovation that will be the basis for making great improvements to North Dakota's election process over the course of the next several years."

HAVA requires that each state's proposed plan be open to public review and comment for 30 days before being finalized and submitted to the Federal Election Assistance Commission and

published in the Federal Register for 45 days. The Secretary of State's office will accept public comment between June 25 and July 25, 2003.

The proposed plan is available for review on the Secretary of State's HAVA web site at www.discovernd.com/hava. The plan may also be accessed at the Secretary of State's office, county and city auditors' offices, and public libraries. A copy of the proposed plan can be requested by e-mail, telephone, or by writing the Secretary of State's office. Copies of the plan were mailed to interested parties and voter groups, to include county and city election officials, the state's political parties, and interest groups represented on the state planning committee.

Comments on the proposed plan may be submitted online using the Secretary of State's HAVA web site at www.discovernd.com/hava or in writing to the Secretary of State's office. Jaeger's office will also hold a hearing in Bismarck to consider public comments on the proposed plan on July 21. Participation in the hearing will also be available at Interactive Video Access Network (IVAN) sites in Fargo, Grand Forks, and Minot.

According to Jaeger, the proposed plan addresses:

- Voting System Upgrades and Improvements - to include replacing punch card equipment in Williams County by June 2004 and upgrading the rest of the state by January 2006 with voting systems that allow voters to correct their ballots and allow persons with disabilities to vote unassisted
- Increased Voter Education - to better inform voters about voting procedures, voting systems, the election process, voting locations, and how to correct their ballots
- Voting Information - posting updated and easier to use voter instructions at polling locations and other election related sites
- State Based Grievance Procedure - establishment of a state based grievance procedure for voters to use when submitting complaints
- Election Official Training and Education - increased election official and poll worker education and training, to include increased efforts to recruit poll workers
- Central Voter Database - development and implementation of a Central Voter File, a centralized database of voters for purposes of preventing and detecting fraud and creating Election Day poll books
- Voting System Standards - adoption and development of voting system standards and a voting system test process to ensure voting systems used in the state are meeting minimum standards

For more information about the public comment process, please see the attached Notice Of Public Review And Comment Period Relating To Implementing Election Reform In North Dakota, June 25 To July 25, 2003.

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Attachments